



Organizations for Rural Quality

of Nevada County

Recommendations for Significant Projects

July 1, 2005

Background

1. Western Nevada County faces a potential of four annexation applications to the City of Grass Valley, each of which has requested far more population growth than allowed under either the County or City General Plans.
2. Both General Plans already permit substantial growth of at least 60,000 more people and would need to be amended to allow the additional growth proposed by the developers.
3. As population increases, there is increased pressure on public assets, such as parks, open spaces, trails, creeks and wetlands, wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors.
4. Neighboring counties are growing at high rates, which, if they were to extend to Nevada County, could not be supported without significant loss of history, culture and environmental quality.
5. Neighboring counties are growing in sprawl, a type of growth that wastes natural resources and erodes community values. This rate and type of growth will spill into Nevada County, unless our decision makers take responsible action.
6. Nevada County currently experiences some of the worst air quality in the state, as well as problems with sewage disposal, ground water supply and quality and inequitable distribution of water by the Nevada Irrigation District. Increased rates of population growth will exacerbate these existing problems.
7. The natural topography of Nevada County imposes a limit on growth. For example, growth must be well planned to minimize the potential destruction from catastrophic wildfire.
8. Current residents value the small town character and rural life-style of Nevada County. This can be protected only by thorough analysis of cumulative impacts of the proposed increases in planned development and of the development already permitted, but not yet built, under the Grass Valley and Nevada County General Plans.
9. Amendments to the General Plans that greatly increase the number of housing units will invalidate the environmental impact analysis done for the County's 1995 General Plan, which was based on a build out population of 150,000 residents. A thorough and comprehensive analysis would need to be undertaken, **unless decreasing potential development elsewhere in the unincorporated area offsets population increases.**

Proposed Planning Principles

A. TOTAL ALLOWABLE HOUSING BUILDOUT

- Housing units permitted in the annexations and other proposed developments should not exceed the total housing units permitted in the existing City and County General Plans.
- Increases in planned density should only be permitted when offset by actions that would reduce development in other locations within the City or western Nevada County.
- Annexations and developments should not be approved that would stimulate an increase in the historic countywide growth rates.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

- New development must not result in significant, unmitigated environmental impacts.

C. PUBLIC PARKS AND OPEN SPACE:

- Annexations and other substantial development must contribute to public parks, open space and trails.
- Contributions of public parks and open spaces must be accompanied by a sustainable maintenance-funding plan.
- Any open space offered should be accessible to the public without fee. Such open space must be offered for recreation or qualify as significant wildlife habitat.

D. PHASING OF ANNEXATIONS AND LARGE PROJECTS:

- Phasing is necessary to ensure that the following public benefits are protected:
 - Reasonable growth rates are not exceeded.
 - Jobs-to-housing balance goals are met.
 - Public facilities, infrastructure and services are provided concurrent with development.

E. TRAFFIC:

- Traffic impacts of individual projects must include comprehensive cumulative impact analysis, including expected build-out under the City and County General Plans.
- Projects must not deteriorate traffic below Level of Service D.
- Projects must not be allowed to degrade the quality of life in existing neighborhoods.
- Needed circulation improvements must be paid for on a fair share basis by each project developer and must be provided concurrent with project construction.
- Additional at-grade intersections on Highway 49 within the Grass Valley sphere of influence are dangerous and must not be allowed.



F. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES:

- New development must not cause a reduction in the levels of service of public facilities and services (such as water, sewer, government services, and schools).
- New development must pay its own way for needed public facilities and services concurrent with project construction.
- Construction of private package sewage treatment plants encourages sprawl development outside the community regions of the county, and should not be allowed except to address existing impacts to ground water quality.
- Construction of regional sewage treatment plants encourages sprawl development outside the community regions of the county. The County should not participate in regional sewage treatment planning that would extend sewage infrastructure beyond existing community regions.
- Analysis of water supplies, including both NID and groundwater availability, must be based on drought conditions.
- No increases in sewer system hookups should be allowed beyond infill until system improvements are made.

G. HOUSING:

- Cities should approve only the amount of residential development through annexation that will meet the housing need requirements not met by infill development. Residential development beyond this level results in sprawl and does not encourage infill.
- Affordable housing should be provided in individual projects based on City and County Housing Element requirements. A mechanism must be developed to retain affordable housing permanently, prior to approving the development.

H. ECONOMY:

- Projects in the annexation areas should not include shopping centers, which serve more than the neighborhood demand created by the new housing. This would detract from our existing downtowns and retail centers.
- Phasing of development should ensure that jobs and housing are provided concurrently with the need.

I. SMART GROWTH:

- A project out of scale with the community will not integrate into our small town regardless of proposed amenities.
- Projects must promote public transportation.
- Development along the Highway 49 corridor south of Grass Valley should be discouraged, since it promotes sprawl into rural areas.
- We support the provision of performance and recreational activity venues; art, theater and music centers; retreats, etc. These types of uses will fulfill an unmet economic need in our community.

